1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

115 putation when he first joined our party, but it was very soon evident that he was handier, quicker and more intelligent in every way than the other peasant Sinhalese with whom we came in contact. Still later we discovered that by his influence a large clearing had been illegally made in a remote part of the jungle near Nuwaragala, and that on account of this he was doing his best to prevent our coming in contact with the Sitala Wanniya Veddas in whose territory the clearing had been made. Although in this he played us false and caused much needless trouble we found him in other matters a perfectly trustworthy witness, and as he had associated more or less constantly with the Kovil Vanamai Veddas from the age of 10 to 20, there is every reason
161 to accept his account of their condition 25 years ago. At this
221 time there were about 50 families, i.e. some 200 people, who led
621 a wandering hunting life for half of the year, during which time they lived in rock shelters and depended largely on honey; for the rest of the year they paid more or less attention to chena cultivation, growing especially maize and *kurakhan* (*Eleusine coracana*). Two or three families—not necessarily the same year after year—would usually wander and hunt together; such groups of families might also make chenas together, though five or six families would often join to make a single chena.

222 Although they had a few guns even 20 years ago, bows and
411 arrows were in common use and much of their hunting consisted
● 423 of monkey drives. There were no mixed Sinhalese and Vedda chenas then. The Arachi remembers three caves belonging to
621 the ancestors of the present Bandaraduwa Veddas, viz. Walimbagalagalge, Ellavellagalge and Vianbendegalge. Each family was the recognised possessor of one or more rocky hills on which there were colonies of the rock bee, but the whole of the small hunting community would join to collect honey from each hill and the honey was always equally shared.

614 The Kovil Vanamai Veddas belonged to Morane and Unapane and Uru *waruge*. The latter lived apart near Uniche, i.e. between Tumpalamcholai and the coast. The Arachi states
197 that the language has altered during the last 20 years, Tamil
198 tending to displace Sinhalese, thus *tirakodoi*, "nothing," is said

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Things new to them which we showed.

them often provoked peals of laughter; to see the eldest and most venerable man solemnly have his thumb nail pressed by a brass machine (algometer) was particularly amusing to the rest of the community, one man actually rolling on the ground with laughter. The old man took it all in excellent part and smiled indulgently. Doubtless Veddas vary much in character, but all except the "show" Veddas are genial and courteous, and have always been rightly considered truthful. At Sitala Wanniya Handuna was the most intelligent man, keenly interested in all the new things we showed him; he obviously ruled the community by force of character, coupled with the fact that he was a shaman. Nila, however, was also a shaman, but he was obviously not so strong a man as Handuna, to whose opinion he deferred, and naturally took second place. Vela, half-brother of Handuna, was extremely shy but by no means stupid, he generally tried to get out of doing things, professing inability, but when urged by Handuna did everything as well as the other men. Kaira, *baena* (son-in-law) to Handuna, was intelligent and talkative and inclined to be boastful. Pema, *baena* to Nila, did not speak much, chiefly we thought because he was a young man and had not much to tell, for although he did not chatter like Kaira he smiled and did not hang his head when addressed, as Vela did.

Whether staying in a "private" or "communal" cave the family life continues in much the same manner. If in a communal cave, each family keeps strictly within its own limits, the women may always be seen at exactly the same spot, and when the men come in they sit or lie beside their wives, keeping to that part of the cave floor that belongs to them as carefully as though there was a partition dividing it from that of their neighbours. Figure 2 is a plan of Pihilegodagalge showing the actual division of floor space. Food is frequently cooked by one woman and shared by all the members of the community, in fact, although it might be cooked separately, it did not seem that any food was private property. One other fact was very noticeable in communal caves, namely, that men never kept their bows and arrows in their own division, but always put them all together in a particular

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

place. The "arsenal" at Bendiyagalge is well seen in Plate XIX, figures 1 and 2, while at Pihilegodagalge all the bows and arrows were rested on an old ant heap in the centre of the cave.

Though men do sometimes dig for yams, hunting is essentially their work, and yams were usually dug by the women who also do the cooking. This is of the simplest kind; yams are roasted in ashes, in which way meat may also be cooked, while practically everything else is boiled in a pot over three stones. Many Veddas also know how to cook curry, and deer's flesh is dried on a rack and smoked. A rack is built usually in a sunny place, the meat is put on this and a smoky fire kept burning beneath it, the flesh is thus dried in the sun and smoked simultaneously. This process is usually superintended by men.

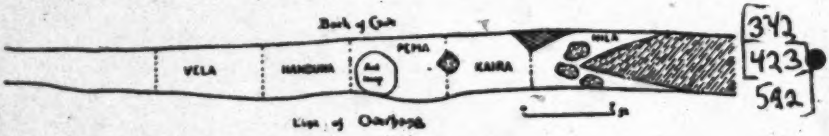


Fig. 2. Plan of Pihilegodagalge.

Plate XVII, figure 1, shows a rack built to smoke meat on the top of the Bendiyagalge rock-mass.

A Vedda will never sleep on the ground if there is any rock upon which he can lie. If he has a deerskin or a piece of cloth he will lie on it, if not he does not seem to object to the cold rock, and so avoids contact with the ground damp from the heavy dews. He always keeps a small fire burning beside him; this was noticed by Nevill, who says: "A Vaedda never sleeps without a smouldering fire by his side. I am assured, should accident oblige them to do so, they have usually died from a fever caught by the omission[1]."

The Veddas are strictly monogamous, and we were able to confirm Bailey's observations as regards their marital fidelity. "Their constancy to their wives is a very remarkable trait in their character in a country where conjugal fidelity is certainly not classed as the highest of domestic virtues. Infidelity,

[1] *Taprobanian*, Vol. 1, Aug. 1886, p. 187.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AXS Vedda AXS

CHAPTER V

PROPERTY AND INHERITANCE

421 ALL Veddas have a keen sense of ownership, and this is equally developed with regard to the hunting land of the group and the possessions of the individual. It was clear that of old the boundaries of the former were accurately known to all the men of the group and were seldom disregarded except in pursuit of a wounded animal, a contingency especially provided for by the Vedda game laws, and many writers have borne testimony to the unwillingness of Veddas to trespass on the territory of another group.

423 609 This was noted by Knox, whose remarks on this subject have already been quoted on p. 7. The next mention of this important feature in the organization of the Veddas is made by the Dutch Governor of Ceylon, Ryklof van Goens (1664—1675), the following account being taken from the Drs Sarasin: "The jungle is so divided among the Veddas that every one can easily recognise his boundary...they leave, however, comfortable roads through the interior of their country, for their own purposes as well as for strangers who are obliged to travel from the hills to the plains and vice versa. Don Juan de Costa has told us of such a journey made in the service of Rajah Singha. It was 45 years ago (consequently in 1630) that he descended from the mountains to these Veddah districts. There he was stopped by an archer who was accompanied by others who, armed in a similar manner, stood under the trees. The first enquired his business, whither he intended travelling and what was his mission, whereupon he explained his purpose. He had then to wait there between one and two hours until

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

word arrived from the elder of the district. Then one of the archers accompanied him to the boundary which took between two and three hours' walking. Here he had once more to wait until word arrived from the elders of this district, whereupon the first guide handed him over to a second and then returned. In this way the second guide brought him to a third, and the process continued until he had had more than twelve guides, being over seven days on the way before he reached the province of Batticaloa and the flat district which extended to the coast, and is inhabited by Tamils. He and his ten or twelve companions never suffered any want on the way, as the Veddahs supplied them with food, consisting of good dried venison which was preserved in honey, ground nuts (probably yams) and fruit. But none of the Veddahs spoke a word with him or his companions because it was so prescribed by their customs[1]."

Nevill's account of the life led by both the wilder and the more sophisticated "forest" Veddas has been quoted on pp. 81 and 82, in the chapter on Family Life. Nevill's experience was chiefly gained among the Veddas of the Bintenne, but if rather less emphasis be laid on the hut built "close to a place where water can be got," and it be realised that even during the hot dry season rock shelters are the common homes of the wilder Veddas to the east of the Badulla-Batticaloa road, all that he says on this subject can be implicitly accepted.

Commenting upon Nevill's account, the Sarasins point out that since trespassing on land belonging to another group leads to fierce quarrels, the condition described by Nevill must be taken to imply that the territory of each group includes the whole or a part of one considerable hill or rock *massif*. Our experience enables us to confirm this suggestion, and it will be shown later that not only are hills the property of particular groups, but that subject to the rights of the group there is also personal property in hills. Text figure 4 is a sketch map of the territory of the Henebedda Veddas, and roughly shows the position of their caves, which are named Bendiyagalge, Pattiavelagalge, Hitibeminigalge, Punchikiriammagalge, Uhapitagalge, Maladeniyagalge and Kirawanbalagalge. The last is almost

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 479.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

423
361

too small and too exposed to be called a shelter, consisting as it does of a small space under an overhanging slab which offers scarcely any protection from the weather, for which reason it seemed that it was never used. Bendiyagalge, situated about the centre of the Henebedda territory, consists of two rock

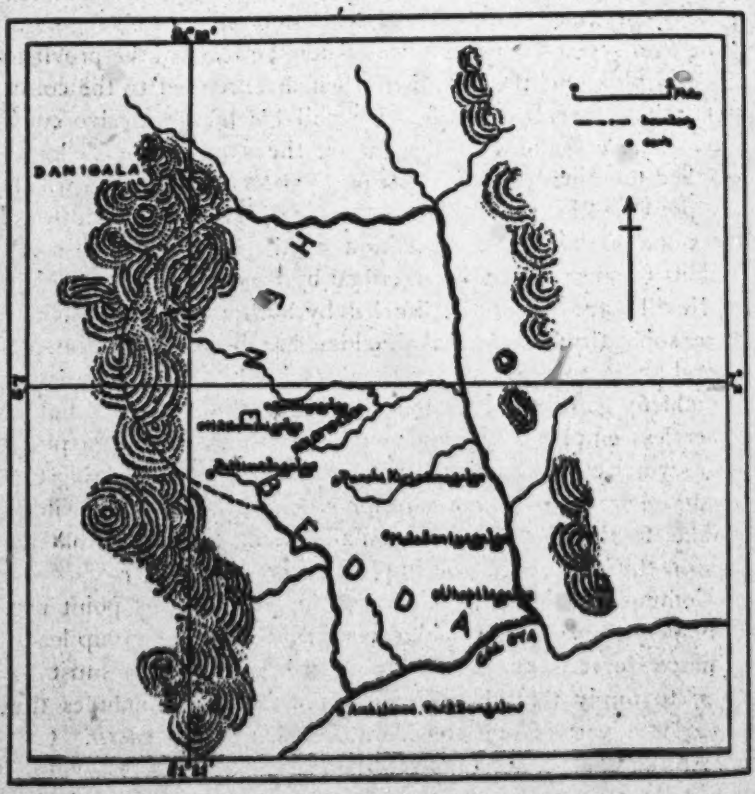


Fig. 4. Plan of the Henebedda territory.

shelters formed by a single mass of rock, broadly speaking, rectangular in shape, with its long axis running roughly from north to south. The rock mass is somewhat tilted so that its southern edge is high above the *talawa* towards which its northern extremity slopes, and the whole rock somewhat resembles an immense wedge. Its eastern face has weathered

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

so as to form two rock shelters, each of which has a well-cut drip ledge in no respect differing from those admittedly cut by the Sinhalese about the time that Buddhism was introduced to the island, and the lower cave has in addition two square sockets cut in its roof resembling those discovered by Mr F. Lewis at Nuwaragala and figured by him[1]. Further, there are three steps cut in the solid rock shelters, and other smaller steps and signs of ancient working are to be found in the caves, though there are no inscriptions on the rocks of either of these caves, as there are below the drip ledge of Uhapitagalge.

Pattiavelagalge lies at a distance of rather less than an hour's walk to the S.W. of Bendiyagalge, at the base of the rocky hills forming the boundary of the territory of the Henebedda community. It was said that the name of this cave was derived from *pattia*, a place where cattle were tied, and *vela*, a field, the reason for the name being that about 100 years ago a Sinhalese chief, recognised by the Veddas as being partly of Vedda descent, was allowed to come and live here and pasture his cattle. This man may have been a fugitive during the rebellion of 1818, but this could not be determined with certainty. Hitibeminigalge lies a short distance due west of Bendiyagalge.

Punchikiriammagalge is a small shelter situated almost due south of Bendiyagalge and near the main track across the country. At the present day it is often used by Tamil gall-nut gatherers. Maladeniyagalge, about two miles from Ambilinne rest-house, is also much used by gall-nut collectors. Uhapitagalge, shown in Plate XVII, figure 2, has a well-carved drip ledge, beneath which is the inscription in Brāhmi characters referred to on p. 22.

The natural boundaries of the Henebedda territory as well as the fact that they still have as neighbours the Danigala Veddas, who exercise a jealous supervision of the border on that side on which there is no well-marked natural boundary, made this particularly easy territory to map out. The Sitala Wanniya territory, which we have attempted to delimit in text figure 5 was more difficult and its boundary is only an approximation.

[1] *Proc. Roy. As. Soc., Ceylon Branch*, Vol. XIX, 1907.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

●423
361

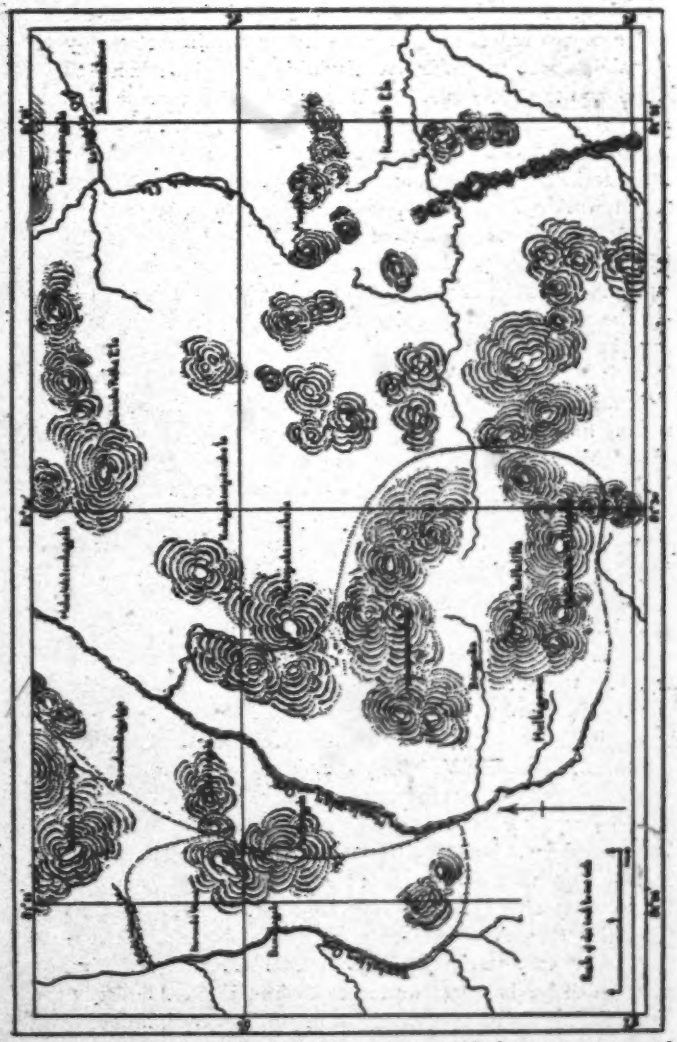


Fig. 5. Plan of Sitala Wanniya territory. All the country to the west of the dotted and broken lines is the property of the Sitala Wanniya community. The land belonging exclusively to Handuna and Nila is outlined]–|–|–, their common boundary line passing through Marinagala and the western portion belonging to Handuna. The land claimed by Kaira is indicated by —··—··, and where the boundary is doubtful by ·····. The country to the east is the property of the Veddas of Kovil Vanamai (Bandaraduwa).

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

Nevill has pointed out that besides the territory of the group which is common land, every Vedda has "within this...a subdivision of his own which compares with the manor." In this he is no doubt right, though it was only at Sitala Wanniya that we were able to trace even approximately the hunting grounds belonging to individuals, which are theirs for the whole of their life, and descend to their heirs unless voluntarily alienated with the full consent of the group. So well is private ownership in a portion of land belonging to the group recognised in this community, that a man would not hunt even on his brother's land without the latter's permission; and if game started and wounded on his own land were killed on another man's domain, the man on whose territory the animal died would be given a portion of the flesh, apparently that side of the animal which touched the ground as the animal lay dead. Among other Veddas it was said half, or more generally a quarter, of the animal belonged to the man on whose land it died.

At Sitala Wanniya we not only found particular hills regarded as the property of individuals, but besides the big cave Pihilegodagalge, which was the property of the whole group of five families, there were smaller caves which were the property of the heads of individual families to which no others would have been welcomed, even had they thought of intruding. An exception was, however, made in the case of a man's *baena* (son-in-law), who we were told would naturally come and go as he pleased.

As has been shown in the chapter on Family Life, presents are often given at marriage, and these may take the form of personal property or hills or pools. In this section we shall deal with such transfers of real property, which in normal circumstances were made only to children and sons-in-law, and even then were not made over without the assent of every adult male member of the group. As this difficult subject does not lend itself to a general description, we shall limit ourselves to giving actual instances of land transfer with which we became acquainted.

When Vela of Sitala Wanniya married a woman of Bingoda his father-in-law gave him a piece of land in Marniye *pangua*

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

425 with a hill on it containing a cave called Marniyegalge and a
431 number of *bambara* colonies. He was also given a number of
583 pools in a river in Damenegama[1].

Handuna of Godatalawa on his marriage was given a hill with a cave in it called Balatgalagalge. This was handed over to him by his father-in-law and the gift carried with it the sole right to take rock honey on the hill, which was known to be the home of six swarms of *bambara*. Kaira Hudubandar son-in-law of Handuna of Godatalawa received on his first marriage a big pool in the Tota Oya river.

When Kumi the sister of the Vidane of Bandaraduwa married Tissahami, the bride's parents made over to her the hill Rajahele near Walimbagala, upon which there were about ten *bambara* colonies. Kumi also received Nalle Kotanwala, a stretch or pool—we could not determine which—in the Kalugal Oya. They also gave her husband the hill called Kuda Rasahele upon which six combs of the rock bee were known.

When Badapisi married, her father gave her husband Sinawa a hill called Bala Attahele on which there were known to be eight *bambara* colonies and a pool called Adanewala in the Kalugal Oya.

Tissahami the Vidane of Bandaraduwa received on his marriage the hill Maha Yakini Hela, upon which there were over twenty known *bambara* colonies[2].

With regard to these gifts of land we must record that although a man divides his landed property equally between his children in preparation for his death, property given at marriage to a son-in-law is counted as the daughter's share when the time comes for a man to make his final disposition.

423 When the land belonging to a Vedda group was not defined by natural features, such as a stream or hill, a mark representing a man with a drawn bow was cut upon the trunks of trees along the boundary line. It is doubtful whether these marks are

[1] We believe this was a small stream, and the right to fish in it was not highly valued, partly perhaps because not many fish were caught, but also because Veddas do not often eat fish when they can get other flesh.

[2] The numbers of colonies of rock bees mentioned in these accounts are probably inaccurate, except perhaps in the case of the Bandaraduwa hills, for most Veddas became confused when attempting to count above five or six.

[602]

Plate XXII

423
[342]

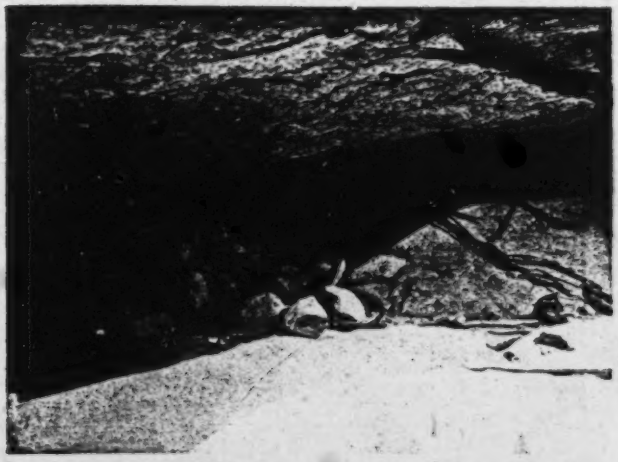


Fig. 1. Portion of Pihilegodagalge belonging to Kaira

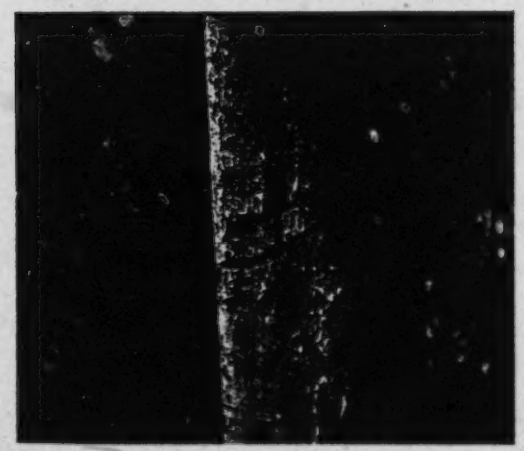


Fig. 2. Boundary mark cut by Handuna of Sitala/Wanniya

[facing p. 112]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

made at the present day, but Handuna readily cut with his axe the mark shown in Plate XXII, figure 2, and of which a drawing to scale is given in text figure 6.

The sign of transfer of a hill, pool, or piece of land, was a stone; we heard of this from so many independent sources that we have no doubt that this was formerly the universal custom,

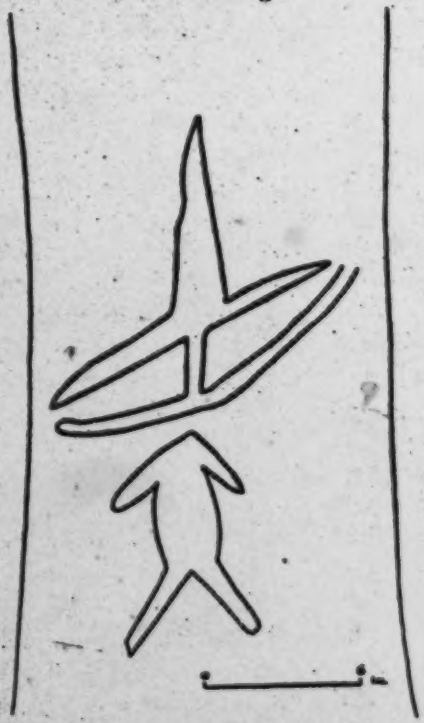


Fig. 6. Boundary mark.

but it was not until we reached Sitala Wanniya that we found people among whom this sign of land transfer was still in vogue. Here Handuna showed us a stone—a water-worn quartz pebble about the size of a filbert—which he assured us represented the "seisin" of his hunting ground. Besides one or more stones a tooth was commonly given to the new owner by the man handing over the land, but this was not essential, and if the

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

The near relations, including sons-in-law of the dying man, would come to him when death was expected, and it was a matter of duty for the sons or other near relatives to send information of a man's dangerous illness to his sons-in-law, and the latter would be justly angry if this information were withheld from them. We were never able to determine whether a son-in-law actually benefited by being present at his father-in-law's death, we believe that his presence was only an act of pious duty, and that he derived no increased right to the dead man's property by this. Certainly the land which came to a man at his marriage from his father-in-law would not be given to anyone else by the latter on his deathbed; we have, however, some reason to think that the unmarried sons of a man's sisters might, as the result of their attendance at their potential father-in-law's death-bed, be given land which otherwise would not have come to them until their marriage, or perhaps not at all. Handuna of Sitala Wanniya thought that a sick man might sometimes give his son-in-law a lock of his hair, but unfortunately it was not possible to discover under what circumstances, if any, this occurred. That land was commonly given to sons and not to sons-in-law by a dying man was clear from the very explicit statement made by Handuna, "My sons will naturally take my stones as evidence of their right to possess my land." With regard to the division of land between a man's children, it was pointed out that most people made their wishes on this point clear during their lifetime and it must always be remembered that no landed property passed without the consent of the grown men of the group.

It seemed that the borders of each group's territory were so well known to all the members that quarrels concerning land were very rare, trespassing upon another man's domain was almost unknown, though when it did occur it was strongly resented. Knox's account of something very like a pitched battle between two parties of Veddas which has already been quoted on p. 7 shows this, and we were everywhere told that until a few years ago a man trespassing on the territory of others might have been shot without fear of this provoking reprisals.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

The care with which the seclusion of the rock-shelter is still maintained probably belongs to a different category of ideas, and is an example of the jealousy with which Vedda women are guarded.

At Sitala Wanniya we heard of the following method of settling disputes concerning boundaries, though Handuna my informant had never known of any example of a difficulty of this kind arising, and had only heard of the method of settling them from his father and father-in-law. When two Veddas, or groups of Veddas, are not satisfied as to the position of a boundary, the disputants each bring their "seisin" stone to the land over which the quarrel has arisen. Here the stones are placed in pots upon supports of the kind used in the Nae Yaku ceremony at Bandarasduwa (Plate XXXVI, figure 1). When this has been done the disputants invoke certain spiritual agencies, but who these are my informants could not tell me. As a result of this, a wild animal, usually an elephant, would come and destroy the pot set up by the party wrongfully claiming the tract of land.

Every Vedda has one or two dogs with which he does not readily part, though with characteristic generosity he is ever willing to give away pups to any of his friends or relatives. Vedda dogs are invariably well fed and well treated, and it was clear that the warmest feelings exist between a man and his dogs. As evidence of the importance of dogs in the community we may cite their use as wedding gifts and refer to the process of anointing them with a part of the offering dedicated to the *yaku* described in Chapter VI. Bailey's account of the relation of Vedda dogs to their masters brings out so much of this feeling that it is quoted here at length. "They have dogs perfectly trained to follow up and pull down the wounded deer. These they value highly; but they are of no distinct breed and do not differ from the ordinary country dogs. But it would appear that at a time when hunting was of more importance to them than it is now, the dog was more valued....

"But dogs are still prized by the Veddah. Of all his possessions he values most his bow, which is placed under his head when he sleeps; and next in his estimation is the dog who

2: Bailey G-5 (ca. 1854) 1863
AX5 Vedda AX5

I shall say nothing, for they have long associated, although they have not yet intermarried, with the neighbouring Singhalese. The former resemble those of Nilgala. If they are less wild, it is but a shade less wild, almost too slight to be called more civilized. They, in like manner, are distributed in small tribes or families. They live in huts formed of boughs and bark, not so much from any advance in civilization, as from the dearth of rock caves, which abound in Nilgala; but they, too, become Troglodytes in wet weather. They cultivate small patches of chena,* but their chief source of livelihood is the produce of the chase, and honey; and they move about from forest to forest, guided by the blossoming of the flowers, in search of bees and game. Their number in 1856 was 364, but some of these even were much more wild than others.

Both Nilgala and Bintenne Veddahs regard, for each tribe, particular tracts of country as their own, and are, as Knox tells us, careful not to trespass over each other's bounds, and they observe the custom, still prevalent among Kandyans, which entitles the lord of the soil to a portion of the game killed upon it.†

In my description of the wild Veddahs of Nilgala, and those of Bintenne, it is well to bear in mind that, though they are not fifty miles apart, there is no communication whatever between them. No individual Veddah of the one district ever saw one of the other. They are entirely distinct; but distinct only in geographical position. They have inherited the same customs, superstitions, names, and dialect.‡

In appearance, the Veddahs differ materially from the Singhalese. They are smaller in every respect, and rather darker, or, more properly, more dusky in complexion. They are short, slightly built, yet very active. Though far from being muscular, their limbs are firmly knit together, and they are athletic and capable of enduring great fatigue. Though spare, they are generally in very fair condition, and look more healthy than many of the Singhalese in the adjoining districts.§

The tallest Veddah I ever saw, a man so towering above his

* A "chéna" is a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again. It is recleared again after intervals of from five to ten years.

† This custom is called gang-gâté, lit. village hind leg; "gama" would be better translated "township", as it signifies a tract of ground within certain limits. The lord of the soil claims the "hind leg" of any deer, etc., killed within his bounds.

‡ The Veddahs of the Badulla Bintenne appear a distinct sept; those of Nilgala are connected with a Veddah family living just across the Batticalao boundary, close to which their country lies.

§ I use the term "Singhalese" and "Kandyan" in distinction from "Veddah."

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

Equally they were acquainted with tobacco and betel, for I was shown a place where the Veddas established a toll that was paid usually in these particular commodities. 276 [651]

The dog was the only domestic animal reared by the Vedda, and special names were given to these pets. 231 552

The Veddas appeared to have no knowledge of melting iron for the manufacture of their particular implements, which consisted of the bow and arrow, the spear, and the small axe, or hatchet. Arrow and spear-heads were procured by barter; the method of procedure was to clear a small space round the foot of a tree by the wayside leading to a village known to contain smiths. Here the Vedda would hang up to the branch of a tree a vessel containing honey, or a piece of meat, which would be taken by the smith, who in return would hang up an arrow-head. 411 412 326 439

It was understood by both that the quantity or number of articles required would be represented by the number of parcels of meat or honey. Should the smith, however, take the meat and not leave the arrow-heads that were thus silently requisitioned, he would pay the penalty with his life, or some of his animals would be shot by the defrauded Vedda. [628]

The bow was usually made from the wood of the Dunumadala (*Stereospermum chelonioides*) and of the Bignoniaceæ. It was not always of the same length, as this appears to have depended on the springiness of the wood. The arrow was generally about 4 ft. long, or as much as a man could draw the bow to. The arrow-head appears to have been small, large arrow-heads being for ceremonial purposes only. 411 [824]

Fire was obtained by spinning, under moderate pressure, a vertical rod of Welanga wood (*Pterospermum suberifolium*) on a flat piece of wood of the same species, with the point of the former surrounded by floss, or some quickly inflammable material. Later, the flint and steel were found more effective. One example of a flint and steel was shown to me at Panawa, and I tried to purchase it at the owner's valuation, but I found he was most reluctant to sell. I understood that the flint and steel, a lock of hair, and a fragment of cloth represented a title deed, these being given by a dying man to his heir, or adopted heir, as a mode or evidence of transfer. 372 [824] 423 428

4: Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

524 According to my authority the Veddas indulged in no games, unless, indeed, the custom of tossing dry leaves in the air and speculating on their position when they fell back upon the ground could be called a game. This, I am told, was only an occasional recreation, and indulged in by boys alone.

● 423 614 628 The limits of the hunting ground were jealously guarded by the Veddas, and anything like poaching by the members of one clan in the area recognized as belonging to another was punishable by death. Should a hunter lose his way and fall into the hands of a neighbouring clan, he would be closely watched, remaining for the time being in a sort of captivity. If the man's conduct during that time was such as to disarm suspicion he was permitted to go, and might even be accompanied to the confines of the clan's hunting ground, but he would have to proceed at once without looking back, or his conduct might lead to the belief that he was a spy, with fatal consequences.

226 The method of fishing was to hem in a piece of water by closely fencing in both ends of the stream. People would then enter the enclosed piece of water, armed with slender sticks, thrashing the water therewith till a fish was actually struck, when it would be captured. I saw this actually done in one pool on the Kumbukkan.

173 My informant told me that the Veddas were at one time harassed by a race of pygmy people, called the Nittawo, who lived in the country known as Lenama, that extended from Bagura in the Panawa Pattu in the east to the confines of the Kattaragama hills on the west.

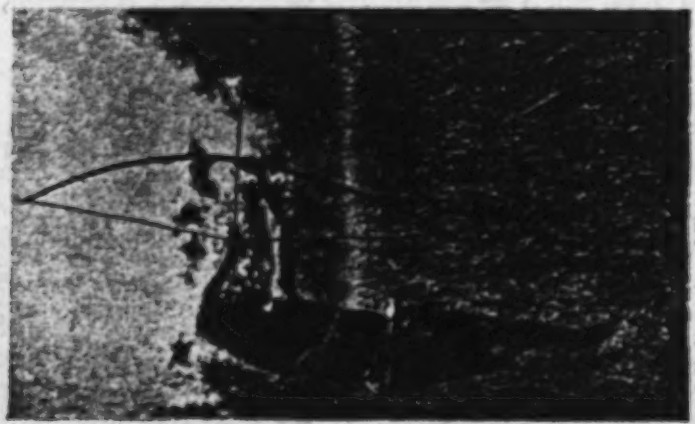
According to him, these people lived in small troops of from 10 to 40, inhabiting caves, hollow trees, and crevices of precipices. They were about 3 feet or a little more in height, exactly like normal human beings, only in miniature. Their legs were hairy like those of the Wanduroo; they walked erect, and had no tails.

Their arms were short and very powerful, with strong hands, and talon-like finger-nails with which they tore and disembowelled whatever they captured. These generally were small animals, such as hare, mouse-deer, monkeys, iguanas, and tortoises. Their method of attack was by surrounding

423
614

Boundary tree marked with bow mark or dhoss hess. ((Page 79)

411



A Vedda archer of Bintenne. (Page 76)

[Facing p. 77]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

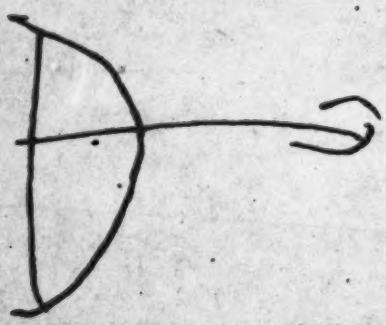
4. VEDDA JUNGLES

The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them

ISAIAH.

THE forests we were now in were the immemorial haunts of the Veddas of Bingoda, Galmede and Sittala Wanniya. They stretched from Bingoda to Newaragala, and included such famous Vedda hills as Walimbe (Friar's Hood) and Bandaradua. The Magalavatan Aar cleaves this country on its way to Unichi tank. The jungle is virginal, but one is surprised to find here an occasional guava bearing luscious fruit, and much wild cinnamon. *Palu* and *veera*, so abundant in the more southern forests, is wanting here.

Nowhere is the Vedda more at home than in this wilderness, intersected by game trails only known to him and wild animals, and studded with the rocks that hold his caves. This land is all their wealth. By old Vedda law it is divided into *panguas* or shares, marked off by such natural landmarks as streams, rocks, or conspicuous trees scored with the *dhunu hena* (bow mark) distorted beyond recognition with age. The *panguas* of the Bingoda Veddas are six:—(1) Madana-gama; (2) Marana-pangua; (3) Kumburu-wella-gama (kuda and maha): (4) Bingoda: (5) Kakalana-bokke: (6) Bandaradua. Of these, the first three are included under the name Galmede and are now the property of Suthu Banda; the last three are Kaurala's. Each of these divisions, in days of greater prosperity, had its own chieftain.



Dhunu-hena or bow mark drawn by Vedda

It is to the credit of these Veddas that they alone of all the Veddas in Ceylon can still name their shares, indicate their boundaries, and observe the traditional law of non-transgression, hunting only in their allotted spheres. Suthu Banda, for instance, would not take the swiftlets' nests on Walimbe because they were Kaurala's by right; nor would he break the hives beyond Newaragala because those lands, once Vedda, have now lapsed to the Sinhalese.

Land goes to the eldest child whether son or daughter; failing them to the nephew. In the old days the proofs of inheritance were a white stone (*kirivanagala*) and molar tooth, bound together with a wisp of human hair; later the *ola* supplanted it; and still later a paper document issued by Government, and so carefully hidden away that it was invariably eaten by termites! These people, it would appear, were wiser than Government in their choice of a seizin.

[p. 79]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

423 But what irony is all this talk of chiefs and clans and possessions, where
656 only a mere handful of spiritless people is concerned. The Veddas alone recognise their boundaries, Government does not. Quite rightly they are not permitted to fell their forests without sanction, or to give their lands away; for what would be easier than to cozen such simple folk. These Veddas may cultivate *chenas* with permission from Government but without tax; a privilege they are impotent to avail themselves of, and are still hunters enough to disregard, whether under encouragement or compulsion. "What lands have the Veddas now?" lamented Kaurala "Our rightful lands! Why should we be deprived of them? The earth of our land is honey to us". And in those words he spoke the doom of his race.

Let us leave the last of the Veddas alone, and not try to fashion them to our ways; for that would kill them the sooner. Let them die out, scattered in their lonely jungles, the hunters they have always been. A few decades hence and the Vedda will be but a name.

651 Not every Vedda is exempt from taxation. I believe those in the Eastern Province are taxed, while those of Uva are not. Why this distinction, it is hard to understand; except for the plea that nowadays it is difficult to say who is a Vedda and who not. But, in cases of doubt, the conditions of life that characterise a particular community should be the criterion that influences the decision, favourably or otherwise. It does seem hard that these poor people, who never handle a single cent from one year's end to another, and have barely a rag with which to cover their nakedness, should have to pay a tax of two rupees with the richest in the land! In default of payment, a penalty of some ten days' work on the roads is imposed; an equitable provision on the face of it; but what of the family with the bread-winner thus engaged? After all, these people only live from day to day; and even sickness very often means starvation.

241 As for *chena* cultivation,* there can be little doubt that it is the one form
311 of agriculture, best suited to the primitive folk of the arid forests; but a
656 serious attempt should be made to better the wasteful methods now in vogue. I remember once travelling through a Province where a progressive, but misguided policy—as applied to these parts—prevailed: *chena* licences had been with-held that year with a view to enforcing paddy cultivation; (in such forests! and among such folk!). The result was disastrous. It was heart-rending to see the starved, emaciated villagers
261 Sinhalese and Veddas alike, digging out wild, unsavoury yams from the baked ground. They would have given their lives for a little *kurrukkan* or maize, which was nowhere to be had.

Chenas represent a very primitive and wasteful form of agriculture. In June of each year an area of jungle is leased by several families. The trees are felled, and burnt two weeks later. The land is then cleared, except for a residue of charred trunks. Temporary huts are suitably disposed, and the whole surrounded by a fence-work of burnt logs, so strong that it must be proof against elephants, so tall that it must top the sambur's leap, so close that it must keep out the hare. By August this work is completed.

In September the crops are sown:—Maize or *iriṅdu* which takes 4 months, and manioc which takes a year to mature; vegetables such as pumpkins, melons and beans (*pukul, wattaka, thimbiri, kakiri, leema*); yams such as *kukul-alla, wal-alla, watapol, kodol*. In October and November, *kurrukkan*, chillies, green-gram, and perhaps a little paddy is planted.

During February, March, and April the *kurrukkan* and maize crops are harvested—or rather what is left of them when the elephants and drought have had their say